

Cordelia Stanwood



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Cordelia Johnson Stanwood lived from 1865 to 1958. A sea captain's daughter, she spent her childhood in Ellsworth Maine.

Teaching was one of the few occupations then available to women, so Miss Stanwood lived with an aunt in Providence Rhode Island for the seven years she prepared to be a teacher, concentrating on botany and art. For almost 20 years, she taught in various schools and acted first as a co-supervisor, and then as supervisor of art in Massachusetts' school districts. Cordelia sent some of her small income home to assist her family. She spent her summers taking classes to increase her meager salary and enhance her chances of obtaining a better position. A nervous breakdown possibly brought on by the strain of many years of constant physical and mental exertion and worry about finances ended her teaching career in

1904. She went home to Ellsworth to recover.

The birds around the home she named Birdsacre interested her and, while regaining her health, she began to fill notebooks with field observations. She was especially fascinated by nests and avian life during the breeding period and wrote articles for magazines about her studies. Miss Stanwood eventually produced over one hundred articles.

She began using photography in 1916 to reproduce what she saw during many hours in the field. Along with other conservation-minded women, she convinced the Maine legislature to ban the importation of bird feathers for hats.

The magazine articles did not always provide enough money, and in time, were no longer desired by periodicals, so she supplemented her income by selling braided and hooked rugs. She studied basking weaving with Penobscot Indians and sold her beautiful woven baskets. Miss Stanwood became more and more impoverished as she aged, but would not accept charity, even from her family. Maine Senator Eugene Hale and Governor Brann, circumvented her pride, however, and were able to assist her financially by purchasing her photos of birds for the state library.

Cordelia recorded her studies in a volume titled *Fir and Feathers*; sadly, the book was never published. However, some of her work did appear in Arthur Bent's *North American Birds*, and the *Birds of Massachusetts and Other New England States* by Edward Forbush.

Chandler Richmond established the Stanwood Birding Club, and at his behest at the end of her life, Miss Stanwood presented her field notes and property to the club. Birdsacre is now a wildlife sanctuary open to the public.

Name of bird <i>Flicker</i>		Year <i>'43</i>	
Locality <i>Ellsworth, Maine</i>			
Observer <i>Cordelia J. Stanwood</i>			
First seen	Number seen	Next seen	Became common
<i>May 3</i>	<i>3</i>		
Last seen	Breeds	Winters	

3-801
January 1940

690 28-14100

Cordelia Stanwood Migration Card

This biography was written using the following resources:

- [BirdsAcre, Cordelia's Story.](#)
- Bonta, Marcia Myers. Women in the Field: America's Pioneering Women Naturalists.
- [Picturing nature, Education, Ornithology and Photography in the life of Cordelia Stanwood, 1865-1958.](#)

BPP volunteer, Mary Perlick contributed this biography to our newsletter, thank you Mary!